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ABSTRACT

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a statement for your consideration . . .

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THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONALLY-APPOINTED CAMPUS PROFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP*

This statement was originally prepared and commended as a study document and guide to college administrators by the Commission on Religion in Higher Education. This action was endorsed by the Board of Directors on June 25, 1972. It is suggested that the statement be shared with all those in the academic community who may have an interest in the subject. Additional copies may be ordered from AAC: single copy, 50¢; 2-25 copies, 25¢ per copy; more than 25 copies, 15¢ per copy. Payment must accompany all orders.

The Religious Situation

Among college and university students, to say nothing of other young people, there is profound and plentiful evidence pointing to a hunger for meaning and purpose unlike anything we have experienced for a quarter of a century. There is a searching for ethical and moral integrity in word and act, a quest for meaningful patterns of activity and structures of community, and a pursuit of larger meaning for personal existence.

During the past twenty-five years a number of forces have been at work, many of which have contributed to the dehumanization and depersonalization of social institutions and public life. Consider, for example, the dissolution of consensus on the terms of public discourse and the goals of public life; the loss of a sense of community and the breakdown of structures of community with their corollaries of personal isolation and alienation; the glorification of technique and expertise at the expense of the wisdom dimension and the separation of ethical judgments from the realm of scholarship and public policy formulation; the separation of knowledge from human experience and the compartmentalization of knowledge through specialization; and the increase of moral cynicism in liberal politics. These and other factors have contributed to a loss of confidence in established institutions and conventional wisdom regarding the American system.

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*This statement is greatly indebted to and draws heavily upon three documents which were used as working papers in the deliberations of the Commission on Religion in Higher Education and its Task Force on the Role of Institutionally-Appointed Campus Professional Religious Leadership. The documents are A Study of the Chaplaincy at Vanderbilt; Exploratory Reflections on Administrative Expectations of the Dean of the Chapel by William L. Kolb, and The Role of Professional Religious Leadership in Colleges and Universities by Luther H. Harshbarger.

In reaction to these trends we have witnessed a social and political protest the like of which has not been seen in many decades. And the many forms of protest have, in some quarters, frequently taken on a character of religious fervor not unlike that of the Anabaptist political sects of the Reformation or the American abolitionists. Anguish and outrage over racial discrimination, the Vietnam War, poverty, and the deterioration of the physical environment have had a counterpart on campus in protests relating to the quality of individual and community life, the teaching-learning process, and the goals of scholarship.

And now we are witnessing a new "religiosity"--myriads of non-institutional quests for salvation in search for adequate standards of action, personal maturity and social relevance--ranging from Guru fascination to the "Jesus Freaks." But this is paralleled by the rapid growth of interest in religious studies and the movement for renewal within the established traditions themselves, e.g., the charismatic movement and the underground church movement. More recently has been the growing withdrawal by many of the young into privatized forms of communal and personal life. "Getting it together" seems to be what's at stake, in part an expression of disillusionment with the results of political and social activism but also a recognition of the need for personal wholeness and commitment to something larger and more important than the solitary self.

Surely these are signs of a spiritual and moral crisis but just as surely they are the signs of spiritual renewal. The current religious situation appears to offer an unusual opportunity for spiritual and moral growth on campus.

The Responsibility of the College or University for the Religious Life of Its Members

The question which must be faced at the outset in consideration of an academic institution's response to these issues is: Is it appropriate for the college or university to take any interest in the religious lives of its members? Or, to put it conversely, should a college or university be indifferent to the religious needs of its members?

Whether the college or university should take an interest in the religious and evaluative lives of its members, or should instead be neutral to religious commitment and practice, depends largely upon one's conception of the college or university and upon one's conception of the manner in which the institution should express its interest. At one end of the conceptual spectrum, the university may be thought of primarily as an association of those who labor together for <u>selected</u>, <u>professional</u> purposes--viz., the collecting, recollecting, and distribution of knowledge and intellectual skills. Under this conception it exists for the creation and expansion of knowledge and the transmission of the cultural heritage, and there can be little impetus arising from its own proper work to interest itself in the religious and moral concern of its members. At the other end, a college or university may be seen in addition, as a community of people who come together for what are fundamentally <u>integrative</u>, <u>self-fulfilling</u> purposes viz., a deepening of self-understanding, of aesthetic and moral sensitivity, and of civic- and world-mindedness. Under such a conception, it naturally becomes proper that the institution concern itself with the development of the <u>total</u> life of its members, including their social, physical,

spiritual, and philanthropic activities. On some things, according to this conception, a college or university should not be neutral: as it provides for health and physical education, as it supports a fraternal and sorority life, and as it participates in arrangements for ROTC, because it values the opportunities thereby afforded to its members, so it may properly supply support and leadership for the religious growth of its members. While public institutions cannot promote any one religion, there is no legal reason why they cannot provide resources which support and encourage members of the academic community in their search for meaning, commitment, and responsible involvement in the world.

However, one may go further. Not only is it proper for a college or university to concern itself with the religious life of its members, it is particularly important to do so. Especially at a time in which professional and disciplinary demands are strong among us, and at a time in which budgetary stringencies reinforce these more easily identified academic needs, it is all the more crucial to insist upon the broadly humanistic aims of the academic community--which are not so easily identified--and upon the importance of such programs as particularly serve those aims. Many students and faculty are demanding an educational context which is more than purely intellectual and technical. They seek a context in which they are encouraged to bring their knowledge and skills to bear upon pressing social and moral issues, to find a sense of community and communication through their specialities, and to affirm and to clarify some personal meaning in what they are doing and training to do. Rightly understood, every part of the educational enterprise should, in its way, be directed to these spiritual and moral ends; practically speaking, some individuals, some academic specialities, and some extra-academic programs consciously aim at them. And the campus ministry--in its widely varying forms--does so explicitly. If this argument is valid, then the aims of the campus ministry are especially germane to the aims of the college or university as such and merit the college or university's very special interest.

Responsibilities and Freedoms of the Campus Ministry

The activities on and off campus of the campus ministry will be defined by a set of responsibilities and freedoms the religious professional brings with him by virtue of the fact that he is engaged in the ministry. There may be debate whether these responsibilities and freedoms are to be defined by the church, by the professional association of the campus ministers, or by the traditions of the college, but there can be little doubt in these cases that they are rooted in the modes of ministry proclaimed in the Testaments of Judaism and Christianity: the roles of pastor, priest, prophet, and governor: the functions of pastoral care of persons, priestly proclamation and ceremonial action, prophetic judgment of the humaneness and justice of the social order, and participation in activities of governance and organization of activities for the care of persons through responsible corporate action.

The problems facing the campus ministry are coextensive with the problems of "man in the modern age." Insofar as its ministry is a ministry to individuals, the personal and political ferment of our time must, because it is a personal

concern of the individual, form its specific challenge. Insofar as these individuals are grouped in a college or university community, the challenge of that ministry is to help the institution become a true community and to be true to itself, with the result that the special problems of the institution are its problems also. And insofar as this ministry reflects the historic Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious traditions, it not only inherits their problems of self-identity, but has in addition, by virtue of its unique relation to education and to the young, the challenge to inform and even to renew these traditions themselves.

The evidence is clear that the role of the campus minister in a college or university has been changing radically during the last decade. The campus minister is rarely perceived (and should not be perceived) as a man who "does the religious thing on public occasions," or who protects the faith of students from the incursions of a college or university education, or who is an adjunct of the Dean of Students Office with the primary function of arranging for certain student activities and consoling individual students in trouble. This model of ministry is radically incomplete. Therefore, the campus minister is increasingly perceived (and should be perceived) as one committed to use the resources of ethical values and of religious faith to help create community, to identify pressing human issues and help bring to bear the resources of the academic community upon them; and to aid members of the university in rethinking traditional religion, recreating traditional liturgy, and in reconciling and reuniting the work of various church and religious groups on the campus. The recreation of traditional liturgy, however, will require the campus minister to exercise an active leadership role in liturgical observance, particularly in the case of those clergy who come from liturgical traditions.

While the isolation of one modality of the ministry as the sole function of campus ministry is a perversion of ministry, there is increasing agreement that the central thrust of the campus ministry in our day is to be found in its concern for policy research, or to use the term coined by the late Kenneth Underwood, prophetic inquiry,* i.e., the ministry of prophecy based on disciplined knowledge with the goal of reforming and perfecting institutional structures for the sake of persons. It should be understood here that ministry is

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*Kenneth W. Underwood was the director of the Danforth Foundation's Study of Campus Ministries and the principal author of the report of the study, The Church, the University, and Social Policy (Middlebury, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1969). In "The Underwood Study Revisited" [Reflection (March 1972), p. 3] Harry E. Smith writes: "Challenging academic communities to become more responsible for the truth they discover and impart, and attacking the widely held belief that knowledge can be neutral or value-free, Underwood developed the notion of "policy research" or "prophetic inquiry" as his key usage to describe faithfulness in the university. If knowledge always requires valuation as to how it relates to the good of persons and institutions, as Underwood repeatedly argued, then the acquisition and transmission of knowledge automatically involves teachers, administrators, and students in decisions and action. "Prophetic inquiry" requires technical knowledge and skill plus ethical reflection and decision. It is interdisciplinary, bringing to bear the sum total of available perspectives and disciplines on a question or situation. It is corporate, requiring the resources and support of a community of persons. And it is transforming, making possible change toward a more humane social order."

a responsibility of both ordained clergy and individual laymen in the world, making possible a corporate ministry of the religious community. Accordingly, the purpose of the pastoral, priestly, prophetic, and governing roles of clergy is to create a community which may perform these functions in the world. Within this community the skills, knowledge, and work of the laity are as essential as those of the professional clergy, including particularly that skill and knowledge which the layman has by virtue of his vocation.

The priestly and pastoral modes of ministry can, if they are divorced from the modes of prophecy and governance, be rather easily assimilated to the demands of stability of the campus and administrative smoothness of operation. This has happened all too frequently in the history of the institutionally-appointed campus professional religious leader. Ceremony and proclamation of the faith are cut off from historical responsibility and the requirements of justice, and pastoral care simply becomes another mode of counseling where the needs of the person are all too easily subordinated to the ostensible needs of the institution. The socially integrative functions of religion become uncritically used instruments of coordinating and easing the activities of the college. Where this happens the cost must be measured in the loss of power and validity of the roles of ministry directly involved, and the loss of the presence of the roles of prophecy and governance.

At the other extreme the campus minister may act out the roles of prophecy and governance without due regard for the close relationship between knowledge, inquiry, and responsible action required by the tradition or without recognition that the acceptance of the role of campus minister does require the recognition of some validity of the institution in which his ministry is located. The exclusive pursuit of the roles of prophecy and governance may also produce neglect of the individual persons who have need of pastoral care and priestly proclamation.

It is in the area between these extremes that the responsibilities and freedoms of an institutionally-appointed campus professional religious leader, whether designated chaplain or coordinator of religious affairs, must be worked out in relation to each of the historical modes of ministry. While these factors set forth the parameters of responsibility and freedom of the campus minister, they also define reciprocally the responsibilities and legitimate expectations of the top college administrator who appoints someone in the role of campus minister. Just as it is his responsibility to defend the academic freedoms and civil liberties of the faculty and students so also is it his responsibility to defend the freedoms necessary for campus ministry--in both cases even against pressures within or outside the college, including the pressures of his own concern for the smooth operation of the institution. In the case of campus ministry, of course, there is always the option not to appoint such an officer, but if such an appointment is made, the responsibilities of the president are equally great.

Relationship to Constituencies

It should be clear thus far that, optimally speaking, the campus minister should perform a ministry to the entire academic community. His function should not be regarded as one confined to students--counseling, developing

religious activities, and the like. He or she must have equal access to faculty and administration if the ministry is to be at all meaningful. In some cases it will be wise and useful to cultivate the participation of ordained faculty in campus ministry, but, above all, concern should be for the involvement of persons from all elements of the community.

All of this is to suggest that the campus minister should be the officer who symbolizes the university's concern and responsibility for religion in the context of its educational policy. The definition of this task and the lines of authority and responsibility should reflect his responsibility to the entire community. Thus, administratively, the campus minister should report only to the president or chief executive officer of the institution. This is not to suggest that administrative accountability eliminates the need for operational relationships to groups concerned with the campus ministry. Typically, the campus minister should be marginal to the chart of organization, identified with no particular faction of the institution whether faculty, administration, student organizations, and above all, not with student affairs, where alas, many chaplains are posited.

The campus minister's inevitable and natural rootage in and responsibility to his own religious tradition may create tension or conflict with his confidence in and responsibility to the academic institution which he serves. Insofar as he takes seriously the priestly mode of his ministry, implying responsibility to the institutions he serves, this mode sets legitimate limits on the other modes of ministry. In his acts of pastoral counseling, of prophetic criticism, and of governance, he cannot deny the fundamental purposes and nature of the institution of which he is a part. If he is convinced of the wrongness of the purpose or that the college is fundamentally guilty of idolatry, his only recourse is to leave the institution.

Structures of the Campus Ministry

The question of a title for the institutionally-appointed professional religious leader is difficult to resolve for the particularities of each institution will generally govern whatever nomenclature is used. Typically, the title, Chaplain, has been used in independent and church-related colleges, along with such titles as Dean of Chapel and Campus Pastor. In public institutions, where the role of the ministry has been subordinated to the more neutral coordinating-administrative role, the title Coordinator or Director of Religious Affairs or Activities has had common usage. There is growing sentiment on public campuses, however, to reassert the connotation of ministry and, paradoxically, on some independent college campuses a movement to appropriate the coordinating imagery. As a consequence, there is coming into occasional usage the title College Chaplain and Coordinator of Religious Affairs or Campus Ministries. There are those who argue persuasively that the title Chaplain is preferable both because of its traditional symbolic significance and also because it is a broad enough title to embrace the several functions to be performed.

The image and reality of the solitary "man of God" is no longer appropriate in the modern college or university. Ministries cannot be performed outside of a context of caring, supporting, cooperating, facilitating, interpreting,

reflecting, and acting persons. The chaplain or campus minister should not be regarded as the institution's person who is going to do his or her religious thing, acting as deputy for the rest of the community. Rather, the professional religious leader will seek the establishment of some structures which will facilitate the work of ministry, perhaps including an advisory group of faculty, administrators, and students.

The Question of Teaching and Faculty Status

One of the historical functions of ministry is in teaching. This teaching function has been both informal and formal; that is, campus ministers have expressed this teaching role both within the formal curriculum of the college and as a part of the co-curricular religious program. Current practices in a wide variety of institutions indicate that over fifty-five per cent of the campus ministers teach and/or hold faculty rank. Differing institutional settings and demands upon campus ministry may suggest one or both types of teaching. In any case, it will be up to each institution to determine what is appropriate.

As for the question of faculty rank, it may be an important, indeed critical, means to insure access to and participation in the processes of decision-making and acceptance by the faculty as a colleague. Again, circumstances in each institution will determine the need for faculty status.

The Relationship Between Religious Studies, Faculty and Campus Ministry

The professional scholar and teacher of religion and the campus minister have much in common. But there has been considerable suspicion and jealousy between the two, thereby obstructing communication, cooperation, and the learning process. Nonetheless, each profession has much to contribute to the other.

Pluralistic scholarship in religious studies can be an intellectual center where students and faculty examine and change their own commitments and formulate beliefs on the basis of learning about the other religions as well as their own, while at the same time they are testing their ethical insights and beliefs in relationship to specific policies both in and outside the institutions in which they are located. This experience can at the same time create a cycle of learning and feedback which would richly infuse the teaching and research of departments. The time is ripe for both scholar/teacher and campus minister to seek out the real feelings and thoughts of participants in situations, and if the traditional modes of acting have no relevance or meaning, abandon them. There are just too many important things to be done in this world to permit outmoded forms of scholarship, accretions of ritual piety and organization which have lost their meaning, to impede discernment of the real occasions in the modern world for thought and action.

Assessing the Kinds of Leadership Required

Every institution should seek to assess its personnel needs in terms of the modalities of the ministry already being met. It is rare, indeed, that any one person can perform equally well the role of pastor, priest, prophet, and king.

Accordingly, in assessing the needs of the institution, one of the things to be done is the exploration of the variety of ways in which existing talent in the community can be and is being tapped. The complexity of the task must be acknowledged at the outset and ways found to meet the multiple needs and responsibilities involved. Team ministries are common today in the university, with a division of responsibility according to the special competencies of each member of the team. In smaller institutions, the resources of parish ministries can sometimes supplement and complement the resources on campus. In any case, the particular needs of each institution should be carefully assessed and weighed before making an appointment and acknowledgment should be given that needs may change substantially from student generation to student generation.

Conclusions

The university or college chaplain performs a complex role, moving in the arenas of decision-making, piercing the "fronts" of factionalism and misuses of knowledge and power, serving as a reconciling and healing influence in the institution, and revealing - through symbol and ritual - the moral and spiritual resources of the religious traditions. In order to perform this role, he must maintain a theological openness, a critical distance, a compassionate and empathetic concern and a profound sense of the limitations of his own wisdom and authority. The chaplain must be both involved and detached.

This job is possible only with the full support of both the academic and religious communities. The campus minister is <u>in</u> the university but in some ways not entirely <u>of</u> it; in some ways <u>of</u> the religious institution but not <u>in</u> it. The chaplain will be fulfilling his role when he can live and work effectively in this tension.